

On account of the fact that the original family chronicles were lost during the troubles which beset the Ming dynasty, the most fantastic legends have come to be spread among the Li Monguors and even among their t'u-ssu, relating to the history of the clan ancestors preceding the Ming period (1368). Some of them circulating among the Li Wen clan have been noted in Monguors I: 26, 27. Concerning the Li Nan-ko branch we possess two recent documents of 1937 and 1941 which Chinese scholars obtained, one from the Li t'u-ssu himself, and one from a clan member.

The first document, *Studies on Frontier Areas of [113] Kansu, Ch'ing-hai, and Tibet*, by Ma Ho-t'ien⁶⁵ records, on page 179, the personal visit of Ma Ho-t'ien to the residence of the Li t'u-ssu in the subprefecture of Ming Hua and his trip to the ancestral cemetery at Hsiang T'ang.⁶⁶

The Li t'u-ssu was so kind as to show the chronicle of his clan. The size of the chronicle is two feet square, the image of the ancestor is depicted on the first page. On the next page is elaborated his history, and so on for each of the ancestors. However, the only trustworthy part of the chronicle is that starting with the surrender of Li Nan-ko to the Ming and relating the succession of the t'u-ssu from 1371 until the present time. The entire text concerning the history of the ancestors preceding Li Nan-ko is unreliable. Then we left the t'u-ssu and went to the ancestral cemetery of the Li Nan-ko branch at Hsiang T'ang.

On page 180:

The cemetery occupies a terrain as large as six acres, enclosed by a mud wall. The central alley, bordered by stone sheep and tigers in a sad state of decay, leads to a big stele, behind which is said to be the tomb of Li Nan-ko, and in front of which is built a stone table for the offerings to the dead. On the stele are engraved the text of the ratification by the Ch'ing emperor, of the appointment granted by the previous Ming emperor to the incumbent to the office of t'u-ssu, the text of a funeral oration granted by an emperor at the death of a t'u-ssu, also the glorious achievements of the clan and the names of the t'u-ssu who died on the field of battle. On both sides of the avenue are erected the steles of the t'u-ssu of the Li Nan-ko clan dating from the Ming and Ch'ing periods, the most recent [324] dating from the Kuang-su period (1875-1909). Outside the enclosure, at the entrance of the cemetery, are erected two big steles, "the spirit way steles." On the one erected on the eighth moon of 1427 is chiseled: (this is) the spirit way stele of Sir Li (Nan-ko), who posthumously received the titles of Yung-lu ta-fu, Yu-chun tu-tu-fu, Pen-chun tu-tu. He is a descendant of Li K'o-yung, whose original name was T'o-pa, to whom was granted the name Li by the Tang emperor. During the Yuan dynasty, Li Shang-ko was functionary at the offices of the prince of Ch'i. To him succeeded consecutively Li Mei-chi-lu, Li Kuan-chi-lu and Li Nan-ko who was Tung-chih (vice-chairman) of the district of Hsining. He received during the Hung-wu period of the Ming the hereditary duty of Tu-chih-huei-shih (High Commandant). To his son Yin was granted, on account of his merits, the title of Earl of Huei Ning,

⁶⁵ Kan, Ch'ing-hai, Tsang pien-ch'ü K'ao-ch'a-chi, Shanghai, Commercial Press, 1947.

⁶⁶ Hsiang T'ang is the name of the locality where the cemetery is situated, and means the Hall of Sacrifice, the room where the corpse is laid out.

himself. We know for sure that 1371 was the year ^{175x} of his submission to the Ming, and also the time of his ⁶¹⁴ death is historically fixed at 1488. It is hard to explain how this man has been clever enough to be an official during 117 years!

THE SPIRIT WAY STELES

In the first document it is noted that the first spirit way stele was erected in 1427 in honor of Li Nan-ko, ^{175x} the first t'u-ssu and founding ancestor of the clan. According to the *Annals* of Kansu (42: 46b), Li Nan-ko died in 1407, his son Li Yin received in 1427 the title of Earl of Huei Ning, and the title granted to the son was posthumously bestowed at the same time upon the father (*Annals* of Hsining 27: 10a. *Annals* of Kansu 42: 47). This distinction which, according to the Chinese mentality, primarily honored the father who had reared so glorious a son, obviously seems to have been the cause of the erection of the spirit way stele at the entrance of the clan cemetery in honor of Li Nan-ko in 1427 by Li Yin himself. ^{764 324}

The second spirit way stele was erected in 1475 in honor of Li Yin. Li Yin probably died a few years after 1437. His son, Li Ch'ang, succeeded to his father only in 1457, on account of the discredit weighing upon the clan. Li Ch'ang died in 1493 (*Annals* of Kansu 42: 46; *Annals* of Hsining 27: 10). Emperor Hsien Tsung only in 1475 promoted Li Ch'ang, and he honored him in a special way at his death, sending splendid funeral gifts and a funeral oration (*Annals* of Hsining 27: 2b) written by himself, containing the glorification of the virtues of the deceased. This oration had to be burned before the coffin as a last farewell of the emperor to his faithful subject. The distinguished promotion received from the emperor in 1475 seems to have been the reason for the erection of the spirit way stele by Li Ch'ang to his father Li Yin in 1475, the father upon whom redounded the imperial attention bestowed upon his eminent son. ^[648]

THE CEMETERY OF HSIANG T'ANG

The cemetery of Hsiang T'ang is definitely the most ^{175x} elaborate cemetery built in the country and it is said ⁶¹⁴ to have been erected to glorify the entire Li clan. ⁷⁶⁴ I trusted this tradition accepted by prominent scholars and officials in the country, who founded their statement on an erroneous text of the *Annals* of Hsining (27: 2a) claiming that both Li clans were the descendants of Li Nan-ko (Monguors I: 70, 71). However, not a single stele is encountered in the cemetery pointing to members of the Li Wen clan, which has its own ancestral cemetery at the foot of the Han P'ing mountain, situated ten li north of the city of Hsining, with steles and inscriptions (*Annals* of Hsining 7: 8a). This cemetery is not as elaborate as the one of the Li Nan-ko branch with its spirit way steles, etc., but